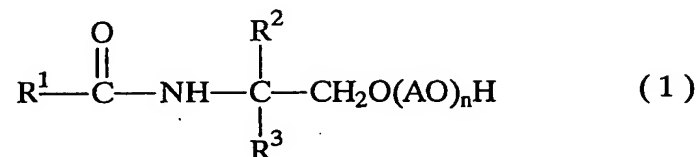


Claims:

1. A thickener comprising a fatty acid alkanolamide represented by the general formula (1):



wherein  $\text{R}^1$  represents a straight-chain or branched alkyl or alkenyl group, having 5 to 21 carbon atoms, which may be substituted with at least one hydroxyl group,  $\text{R}^2$  and  $\text{R}^3$  independently represent an alkyl group having 1 to 2 carbon atoms, AO represents an oxyalkylene group having 2 to 4 carbon atoms and n denotes a number of 0 to 10 in average.

2. The thickener according to Claim 1, wherein  $\text{R}^2$  and  $\text{R}^3$  represent a methyl group.
3. A surfactant composition comprising the thickener as claimed in Claim 1 or 2 and at least one surfactant.
4. The surfactant composition according to Claim 3, wherein the surfactant is an anionic surfactant.
5. Use of a fatty acid alkanolamide as defined in Claim 1 or 2 to thicken a surfactant.
6. A method of thickening a surfactant, which comprises mixing a fatty acid alkanolamide as defined in Claim 1 or 2 with the surfactant.